

# ST. LOUIS NORTH RIVERFRONT TRAIL

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## Community Based Environmental Protection

**CBEP** is an innovative approach taken by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to aid in protecting human health and the environment. The intent of CBEP is to bring people who live or work in a community together to (1) identify environmental concerns at the neighborhood level; (2) establish priorities among the various participants and governmental agencies; and (3) assist residents and partners in resolving environmental issues that will improve the quality of life in their neighborhoods.

### **BACKGROUND**

In August, 1998 EPA provided \$158,922 to the Grace Hill Neighborhood Services Corporation to pursue environmental activities under a project called "North Riverfront Sustainable Communities." This project was one of 43 selected in national competition through the Sustainable Development Challenge Grant program. There were several components to this three-year proposal, one being the North Riverfront Trail.

The Trail runs between Laclede's Landing and the Chain of Rocks Bridge. This 12 mile stretch is one component of the Confluence Greenway Plan which proposes a 40-mile recreational trail system that follows both sides of the river from St. Louis and East St. Louis, north to the confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi, running through industrial areas, largely in the flood plain and is, in some places, on the dry side of the levee and some places the wet side. The land along the edge of the river provides habitat for a large variety of birds, insects and animals customarily found at rivers edge. Private and corporate dumping has historically been a problem. Habitat destruction through industrial encroachment is also occurring.



### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The trail was developed through collaboration of neighborhoods, area businesses, and City and State Government and non-profit organizations. It is multi-use, and provides recreational opportunities to joggers, walkers, bikers and in-line skating enthusiasts. It also offers several miles of scenic overlook along the river, as well as the opportunity to observe a wide variety of birds, small animals, and native plant species. Grace Hill's involvement was to assure that minority and low-income residents living in the area would be able to participate in any economic opportunities arising from the trail's development. Their proposal showed a creative approach to meeting neighborhood needs, and the grant will provide assistance in the areas of environmental protection, economic prosperity and social equity. The environmental part of the project is engaged in cleaning up illegal dumping, habitat restoration, and reintroduction of native plant species. They have also done a bio-diversity assessment, and an eco-tourism survey.

Through other contributors to this project, trail signage has been installed. Low-income youth from the north neighborhood have been recruited and trained to serve as Trail Rangers.



These are part-time jobs, compatible with school schedules, paying \$7.00/hour. Some training has been provided to the Rangers by the staff of the National Park Service assigned to the facility at the St. Louis Arch. Assessments on Eco-tourism and bio-diversity have been completed by the University of Missouri at St. Louis' (UMSL) Natural Resources Department.

Archer, Daniels, Midland, Inc. donated three 3-wheel tri-cycles with portage equipment which can be used for mobile vending on the trail, or for emergency response. The UMSL Natural Resources Department has conducted neighborhood meetings regarding future trail development plans; they have also surveyed over 190 trail users regarding likes/dislikes, areas for improvement, etc.

Doug Eller, Project Director, chairs a monthly meeting hosted by Alderman Dionne Flowers and attended by the Street Department, Parks Dept., Water Dept., the Community Development Department, Trailnet and Grace Hill. Doug also participates in monthly meetings with area businesses, non-profits, and neighborhood organizations, to discuss the North Riverfront community. The existence of the trail and Grace Hill's investment in it has made this happen.

As of February, 2000 a native plant restoration committee made up of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, Missouri Department of Conservation, National Park Service, Metropolitan Sewer District, Trailnet's Confluence Greenway, and Grace Hill, has been meeting for three months, and will begin the plant-

ing of native species along the trail in March. A committee member skilled in the area has agreed to serve as nurseryman and assist in building the nursery. The old Coast Guard building adjacent to the trail will be the site for the nursery, and will provide storage, office and meeting space. They now have commitments to donate all seeds, grass and wild-flower plants and shrubs. A new Americorps project will start in October and will provide some of the labor.

### **STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL**

UMSL Natural Resources Department: Missouri Department of Natural Resources; Missouri Department of Economic Development; National Park Service; Mallinckrodt Chemical Co.; ADM; Parks Dept., Water Dept., And Community Development Dept. of the City of St. Louis; Trailnet; St. Louis 2004; NRCS; Corps of Engineers; Gateway Greening; Metropolitan Sewer District; Forest ReLeaf; Baden Bicycle Shop.



### **OTHER RESOURCES LEVERAGED**

The Missouri Economic Development Department has given \$25,000, NRCS has given \$10,000, and Mallinckrodt has given \$5,000.

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